

RECORD OF FRESHWATER SPONGE *EUNAPIUS CARTERI* (BOWERBANK, 1863) FROM KELADEVI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN

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On 12 December 2004, during a field survey of wetlands in eastern Rajasthan, a few freshwater sponges were collected growing on submerged rocks in an obscure lake of Karauli district. This small lake is located inside Keladevi Wildlife Sanctuary and is close to Asaki forest chowki (26°12.267'N & 76°57.631'E) of the sanctuary. The lake had margins made up of smooth rocks and sponges were found attached to these rocks. They were found growing in small patches of about 10-12cm diameter and about 7-8cm height. The sponges had an irregular bushy shape and were light brown in colour. The surface was rough and there were no rounded or lobose elongations. There were some dried sponges on exposed rocks and boulders indicating that water level had receded in the recent past. Specimen of these sponges were collected and were later identified as *Eunapius carteri* (Bowerbank, 1863). The specimen had fair number of large and spherical gemmules distributed singly throughout the skeletal meshes.

This species was identified as belonging to the phylum Porifera, class Demospongiae, order Haplosclerida, suborder Spongillina and family Spongillidae. This species shows wide distribution in India and also occurs in South-east, South and West Asia and Europe (Soota, 1991).

Four-hundred-and-eighty-six species of sponges have been reported from India out of the 4562 known poriferan species of the World (Thomas, 1998). However, a checklist (Pattanayak, 1999) published subsequently showed the number of marine sponges from Indian waters as being 451; and, Hooper and Van Soest (2002) recorded about 7000 extant species globally. The number of freshwater species is about 100 in the World and only 31 freshwater sponge species (under 11 genera) are found in India (Soota, 1991). There is only a handful of records of sponges available in Rajasthan. Saxena (1996) had reported seven species belonging to five genera of freshwater sponges from western Rajasthan including *E. carteri* with wider distribution in comparison to the other six species. Soota and Saxena (1983) described some sponges of Rajasthan and Soota *et al.* (1983) described sponges of Lake Kailana, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The literature survey revealed no records of freshwater sponges from eastern Rajasthan. The Keoladeo National Park of Bharatpur has been studied extensively for many years but no species of sponge has been reported from this wetland (Saxena, 1975; Vijayan, 1991). No species of sponge was observed at some other lakes and ponds of eastern

Rajasthan surveyed during 2004-05 by the author. The absence of rocky substratum, rocky margins and a short duration of water retention in these lakes and ponds could be plausible reasons for absence of sponges. Thus, the present finding is the first report of any sponge from Keladevi Wildlife Sanctuary and also the first record for eastern Rajasthan.

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